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SUBJECT: UNFPA SEGMENT OF THE 2007 FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF
THE UNDP/UNFPA EXECUTIVE BOARD

REF: USUN 106

11. Summary: The UNDP/UNFPA Joint Executive Board First Regular Session for 2007 took place on January 23-26. Opening the UNFPA segment, UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Obaid announced that UNFPA,s financial situation had achieved record highs in total core income, number of donor countries, and number of multiyear funding pledges. The segment included an informal discussion of UNFPA,s 2008-2011 draft Strategic Plan and an oral presentation on UNFPA,s role in emergency preparedness. UNFPA also explained its role in implementing the cluster approach. The Board approved UNFPA,s 33 country program proposals (including one for North Korea) and adopted a resolution on UNFPA,s proposed Strategic Plan. End Summary.

Executive Director Statement

12. In her opening statement to the Board, UNFPA Exec. Dir.

Obaid discussed the status of UNFPA,s regionalization plan. The proposed plan would move UNFPA,s geographical divisions from its headquarters in New York to their respective regions, expand the functions of existing UNFPA country technical services teams, and strengthen existing area offices to ensure a more strategic, timely, integrated, efficient and flexible response to the needs of countries and UNFPA country offices. However, many Board Members as well as the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget

Questions had expressed strong concerns about the proposal. UNFPA has heard those concerns, she said. In order to be responsive, UNFPA postponed formal consideration of its regionalization plan, originally scheduled for the January Board meeting, until September. Instead, UNFPA would hold an informal discussion of its proposed 2008-2011 Strategic Plan during the Board meeting, she stated.

13. Obaid asserted that a new Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target, universal access to reproductive health, had been added to the MDG matrix. (Mission note. This is just an assertion. Former SYG Annan proposed such a target in his last report on the MDGs, but the U.S. objected formally in the UNGA Plenary and the report was simply "noted." We are also watching carefully in the Statistical Commission to ensure that no "matrix" or other product related to the MDGs is approved with such a target included.) Gender mainstreaming, gender equality, women,s empowerment, and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls are central to UNFPA,s focus, she stressed. Youth are also key to UNFPA,s strategic plan, especially their sexual and reproductive health, Obaid said. UNFPA uses culturally sensitive approaches to promote human rights, create alliances, build capacity, promote South-South cooperation, and work with parliamentarians and civil society to advance the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda, she said.

UN Reform/Accountability

14. UNFPA officials emphasized their commitment to strengthening program accountability and oversight. ExDir Obaid said UNFPA fully supports UN reform, including the report of the High Level Panel on UN System-Wide Coherence. UNFPA is implementing a system of checks and balances to enhance accountability and to prevent and detect fraud. UNFPA has also instituted an Audit Advisory Committee, established a whistleblower hotline, is conducting anti-fraud workshops for staff members, and is working to improve monitoring and evaluation, according to Obaid.

Funding

15. UNFPA,s financial situation in 2006 exceeded 2005 in three areas, Obaid reported: number of donors, total core income, and multi-year pledges. A record high 180 countries pledged financial support in 2006 - eight more than in 2005 - including all countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa. The top ten contributors to UNFPA were the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, United Kingdom, Japan, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Canada, and Switzerland. Total core income was \$362 million, slightly more than in 2005; non-core income remained the same at slightly below \$162 million, for a total of \$524 million. In addition, 73 countries made multi-year pledges, up from 55 in 2005.

Country Programs and Resolutions

16. The Executive Board approved UNFPA,s proposed country programs for Central African Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Mozambique, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Moldova, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, Democratic People,s Republic of Korea, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, English-

and Dutch-speaking Caribbean countries, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

¶17. Several delegations made statements regarding UNFPA,s program for the DPRK after the country programs were approved. Although the Joint Board had reached agreement the previous day to suspend the launch of the new UNDP DPRK program, Member States felt that the UNFPA program which is smaller scale and more closely monitored, did not raise the same level of concern. The U.S. delegation stressed the need for strong oversight of UNFPA,s DPRK program, as did Japan.

Emergency Preparedness

¶18. UNFPA Humanitarian Response Group Chief Pam DeLargy gave an oral presentation on UNFPA,s role in emergency preparedness, humanitarian response, and transition and recovery. UNFPA has a three-year plan with two components, she said. First, UNFPA must build a knowledge base and commitment regarding the importance of gender and reproductive health issues in situations of crisis and transition. This would be achieved by intensified advocacy to sensitize partners; mapping, collating, and sharing of existing tools and resources; developing additional tools and resources; and expanding partnerships for knowledge sharing and applied research to build evidence-based programs.

¶19. Second, UNFPA will improve technical and institutional capacities to incorporate ICPD into overall emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. This would be achieved by building national capacity; establishing technical expert networks and mechanisms for rapid deployment; training of practitioners; and ensuring data/reproductive health expertise as part of overall UN mechanisms.

¶10. DeLargy explained that in the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC - the UN,s primary mechanism for interagency coordination of humanitarian assistance), UNFPA has the lead for the reproductive health subcluster within the Health cluster, for the sexual- and gender-based violence subcluster within the Protection cluster, and for the gender subcluster within the Early Recovery cluster. In addition, IASC has asked UNFPA to take the lead on mainstreaming gender (one of the identified cross-cutting issues) into all nine IASC clusters; UNFPA will accomplish this task through the IASC Sub-Working Group (SWG) on Gender and Humanitarian Action, which UNFPA co-chairs with WHO. UNFPA also chairs a task force within the gender SWG that focuses specifically on gender-based violence (GBV); this task force, which has existed for three years, developed the IASC Guidelines in Addressing GBV in Humanitarian Settings. Finally, UNHCR and OCHA have recently asked UNFPA to coordinate improving age and sex disaggregated data collection and analysis within the cluster system as a whole; UNFPA is working to determine how best to take on this cross-cutting issue.

Strategic Plan

¶11. Obaid launched informal discussion of a draft outline of UNFPA,s 2008-2011 proposed Strategic Plan, which UNFPA had posted on its website just a few days previously. UNFPA was now focusing on youth because of the demographic bulge and its effects, she remarked. UNFPA did not want mission creep and was not trying to encroach on UNICEF,s authority, she assured the Board, but the sharp increase in the number of young women with HIV/AIDS has linked UNFPA,s reproductive health and HIV/AIDS responsibilities with the issue of youth. UNFPA is trying to focus on ICPD priorities and would seek a comprehensive decision from the Board in September on the Plan, she noted.

¶12. UNFPA Strategic Planning Office Chief Brendan O,Brien said UNFPA had made an effort in the Plan to focus on goals that represent UNFPA,s mandate and niche within the UN system. There is a need for clarity to maintain consistency, he stressed. O,Brien also emphasized the importance of

having goals reinforced as cross-cutting issues. For example, the issue of women and gender mainstreaming center around reproductive health and demography but are also a part of a larger framework in the Millennium Development Goals. Young people are another such issue: young people are clearly core to what UNFPA does, he said, but should UNFPA have a specific youth goal in its Strategic Plan stating this, and if so, what? He invited input from the Board during the next several months.

¶13. Several Board members welcomed the proposed Strategic Plan but complained that its release just a few days before the Session left insufficient time to study it adequately. Many requested another informal meeting soon. A sampling of remarks from Member delegations:

- Switzerland praised the Plan,s criteria for evaluating reform options, and said there should be safeguards to ensure effectiveness, transparency, and cost-effectiveness.
- Sweden encouraged UNFPA to work closely with other UN agencies to harmonize approaches to strategic planning. Sweden also said that before UNFPA decides whether gender and youth constitute focus areas for the Plan, it should consider how to establish targets and indicators in these areas to ensure results.

- The Netherlands said discussion of the Plan should lead to a clear conclusion on the preferred organizational structure.

A decision on the structure should be made on the basis of a clear analysis of the current strengths and weaknesses of the organization, especially at the country level. In the process of realizing one integrated UN at the country level, UNFPA must improve its performance at the field level. The Netherlands expressed doubt about whether gender needed to be its focal area in the Plan or should be mainstreamed in other areas.

- Belgium said UNFPA should strive for evidence-based measures in the Plan, and requested more clarity on UNFPA,s interaction with other UN agencies on gender equality.

¶14. The Board adopted 12 resolutions on the final day of the First Regular Session, including one on UNFPA,s proposed Strategic Plan that requested UNFPA to:

- consult widely with Member States and UN partner organizations;
- reflect on lessons and challenges from implementing UNFPA,s 2004-2007 funding framework;
- take the Board,s comments into account when drafting the Strategic Plan; and
- harmonize terminology, definitions, and formats whenever possible using UN Development Group-harmonized terminology as a basis.

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